

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Financial Assistance for Community-based Habitat Restoration Projects

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), Office of Habitat Conservation, Restoration Division.

ACTION: Notice of availability of funds.

CATALOGUE OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: The NOAA Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) is described in the "Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance," under program number 11.463, Habitat Conservation.

DATES: Applications for **project funding** under the CRP **must be received by or postmarked by September 12, 2003**. Applications received or postmarked after that time will not be considered for funding. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Applications delivered by a delivery service after the postmark date will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the application was provided to the delivery service on or prior to the specified postmark cut-off date. In any event, applications received later than 15 business days following the closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

SUMMARY: The purpose of this document is to invite the public to submit proposals for available funding to implement grass-roots habitat restoration projects that will benefit living marine resources, including anadromous fish, under the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program (CRP). This document describes the conditions under which applications (project proposals) will be accepted under the CRP, and describes criteria under which applications will be evaluated for funding consideration. Projects funded through the CRP will be expected to have strong on-the-ground habitat restoration components that provide educational and social benefits for people and their communities in addition to long-term ecological habitat improvements for NOAA trust resources. Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will be implemented through a project grant, cooperative agreement, or interagency transfer. Funding of up to \$3,000,000 is expected to be available for community-based habitat restoration projects in FY 2004. The NOAA Restoration Center (RC) anticipates that typical project awards will range from \$50,000 to \$200,000.

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Description

The CRP, a financial and technical federal assistance program, promotes strong partnerships at the national, regional and local level to fund grass-roots, community-based activities that restore living marine resources and their habitats and promote stewardship and a conservation ethic for NOAA trust

resources. NOAA trust resources are living marine resources that include commercial and recreational fishery resources (marine fish and shellfish and their habitats); anadromous species (fish, such as salmon and striped bass that spawn in freshwater and then migrate to the sea); endangered and threatened marine species and their habitats; marine mammals, turtles, and their habitats; marshes, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, and other coastal habitats; and resources associated with National Marine Sanctuaries and National Estuarine Research Reserves. Due to limited funding available to the CRP, habitats in the Great Lakes region are not covered by this solicitation.

The CRP's objective, as described in this announcement and the CRP Guidelines (65 FR 16890, March 30 2000), is to bring together citizen groups, public and nonprofit organizations, watershed groups, industry, corporations and businesses, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, academics, and local government, state, and federal agencies to cooperatively implement habitat restoration projects. Partnerships developed at national, regional and local levels contribute funding, land, technical assistance, workforce support or other in-kind services to promote citizen participation in the improvement of locally important living marine resources, as well as develop local stewardship and monitoring activities to sustain and evaluate the success of the restoration.

The CRP recognizes the significant role that communities can play in habitat restoration, and acknowledges that habitat restoration is often best implemented through technical and monetary support provided at a community level. Community-based restoration projects supported by the CRP are successful because they have significant local backing, depend upon citizens hands-on involvement, and typically involve NOAA technical assistance or oversight. The role of NOAA in the CRP is to help identify potential restoration projects, strengthen the development and implementation of sound restoration projects and science-based monitoring of such projects within communities, and develop long-term, ongoing national and regional partnerships to support community-based restoration efforts of living marine resource habitats across a wide geographic area. For more information on the CRP, see Section IV. A. "Application Packages".

B. Statutory Authority

The Secretary of Commerce is authorized under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 661, as amended by the Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970, to provide grants or cooperative agreements for fisheries habitat restoration.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that funding of up to \$3,000,000 is expected to be available for community-based habitat restoration projects in FY 2004. The NOAA Restoration Center anticipates that typical project awards will range from \$50,000 to \$200,000; NOAA will not accept proposals for under \$30,000 or proposals for over \$250,000 under this solicitation. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all proposals. The number of awards to be made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for initiating restoration projects by the applicants, the merit and ranking of the

proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the CRP by Congress. NOAA anticipates that between 15 and 45 awards will be made as a result of this solicitation. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this document does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any parts of any available funds. In FY 2003, 30 awards were recommended for funding ranging from \$25,000 to \$200,000 for an approximate total of \$2.2 million; in FY 2002, 33 awards were made ranging from \$15,200 to \$150,000 for a total of \$1.7 million; in FY 2001, 42 awards were made ranging between \$14,400 and \$100,000 for a total of \$1.8 million.

B. Award Period

Generally, the CRP will make awards only to those projects where requested funding will be used to complete proposed restoration and monitoring activities within a period of 24 months from the approved start date of the project. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 120-150 days after the close of this solicitation; applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for proposed restoration activities. If an application is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Any subsequent proposal to continue work on an existing project must be submitted to the competitive process for consideration and will not receive preferential treatment. Renewal of an award to increase funding or to extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of NOAA.

C. Funding Instruments

Proposals selected for funding from non-federal applicants will be funded through a project grant or cooperative agreement under the terms of this document. For applications funded through cooperative agreements, substantial involvement of the federal government in the project may include, but is not limited to, activities such as hands-on technical or permitting assistance, support in developing protocols to adequately monitor the restoration to evaluate success, tracking the progression of the restoration through site visits, and involvement in public events to highlight restoration activities. Proposals selected for funding from a non-NOAA federal agency will be funded through an interagency transfer.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, hospitals, other non-profits, commercial (for profit) organizations, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, international organizations, state, local and Indian tribal governments. Applications from federal agencies will be considered. Before non-NOAA federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from another federal agency in excess of their appropriation. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods or services from applicants, the Economy Act (31 U.S.C. 1535) is not an appropriate legal basis. Although federal agencies are eligible to apply under this solicitation, they are strongly encouraged to work with states, non-governmental organizations, national service clubs or youth corps organizations and others that are

eligible to apply, rather than seeking project funding directly from the CRP.

The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges and Universities in its educational and research programs. The DOC/NOAA vision, mission, and goals are to achieve full participation by Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) in order to advance the development of human potential, to strengthen the nation's capacity to provide high-quality education, and to increase opportunities for MSIs to participate in, and benefit from, federal financial assistance programs. DOC/NOAA encourages proposals for habitat restoration projects involving MSIs according to the criteria in this document.

B. Eligible Restoration Activities

NOAA recognizes that accomplishing restoration is a multi-faceted effort involving project design, engineering services, permitting, construction, oversight and monitoring. NOAA is interested in funding projects that will result in on-the-ground restoration of habitat to benefit living marine resources, including anadromous fish species. Restoration is defined here as activities that contribute to the return of degraded or altered marine, estuarine, coastal and freshwater anadromous fish habitats to a close approximation of their condition prior to disturbance. Restoration may include, but is not limited to, improvement of coastal wetland tidal exchange or reestablishment of historic hydrology; dam or berm removal; improvement or reestablishment of fish passage; reef/substrate/habitat creation; establishment of riparian buffer zones and improvement of freshwater habitat features that support anadromous fish; exclusionary fencing and planting; invasive species removal; planting of native coastal wetland and submerged aquatic vegetation; and enhancement of feeding, spawning and growth areas essential to marine or anadromous fish.

In general, proposed projects should clearly demonstrate anticipated benefits to habitats, such as salt marshes, seagrass beds, coral reefs, mangrove forests, and riparian habitat near rivers, streams and creeks used by anadromous fish, or where fish passage is certain to be restored to habitat formerly used by anadromous fish. Priorities for habitat restoration activities include: areas identified by NOAA Fisheries as essential fish habitat (EFH) and areas within EFH identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern; areas identified as critical habitat for federally or state listed marine and anadromous species; areas identified as important habitat for marine mammals and turtles; watersheds or such other areas under conservation management as special management areas under state coastal management programs; and other important commercial or recreational marine fish habitat, including degraded areas that historically were important habitat for living marine resources. To protect the federal investment, projects on private lands need to provide assurance that the project will be maintained for its intended purpose for the life of the project.

Projects must involve significant community support through an educational and/or volunteer component tied to the restoration activities. Implementation of on-the-ground habitat restoration projects must involve community outreach and monitoring to assess project success, and may involve limited pre-implementation activities, such as engineering and design and short-term baseline studies.

Proposals emphasizing a singular restoration component, such as only outreach or program coordination are discouraged, as are applications that propose to expand an organization's day-to-day activities, or that primarily seek support for administration, salaries, overhead and travel. Because funds are limited, funding land purchase agreements, conservation easements, and artificial reef projects to create habitat where it did not exist historically will be a low priority.

The CRP anticipates the availability of limited funds for high quality, quantitative monitoring projects to advance the science and technology of coastal and marine habitat restoration. Independent/separate proposals emphasizing science-based monitoring of existing or simultaneously proposed CRP projects are encouraged; monitoring proposals for restoration projects other than those funded through the CRP will not be considered.

Although NOAA recognizes that water quality and land use issues may impact habitat restoration efforts, this initiative is intended to fund physical habitat restoration projects. The following restoration projects will not be eligible for funding: (1) Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or federal law; (2) activities that constitute restoration for natural resource damages under federal or state law, (3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation, and (4) direct water quality improvement measures, including wastewater treatment plant upgrades or combined sewer outfall improvements. Funds from the CRP may be sought to enhance restoration activities beyond the scope legally required by these activities.

C. Matching Requirements

The overall focus of the CRP is to provide seed money to individual projects that leverage funds and other contributions from a broad public and private sector to implement locally important habitat restoration to benefit living marine resources. To this end, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate a minimum 1:1 non-Federal match for CRP funds requested to complete the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to leverage as much investment as possible. Applicants with less than 1:1 match will not be disqualified, however, applicants should note that cost-sharing is an element considered in Evaluation Criterion #4. "Project Costs".

For non-federal applicants, the match can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services; cash match is highly encouraged. Federal funds may not be considered matching funds. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from additional non-federal partners in order to meet the 1:1 match expected. Applicants are also permitted to apply federally negotiated indirect costs in excess of federal share limits as described in Section IV. E. 2. "Indirect Costs". Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions, including the number of volunteer or community participation hours devoted to individual habitat restoration projects.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Application Packages

Information on the CRP, including examples of community-based habitat restoration projects that have been funded to date, can be found on the world wide web at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>. The standard NOAA application forms and instructions for applicants are accessible through this web site, or they can be obtained from the NOAA Restoration Center, Community-based Restoration Program, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East West Highway (F/HC3), Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282, or requested by phone at (301)713-0174. Potential applicants are invited to contact NOAA Restoration Center staff before submitting an application to discuss the applicability of project ideas to the CRP's goals and objectives, and to request an application package that contains instructions for submitting NOAA standard grants applications and supplementary instructions specific to the CRP.

B. Application Submission

To apply, a complete NOAA standard grants application package should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Each application should include all specified sections as follows: Cover sheet - an applicant must use Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Standard Form (SF) 424 as the cover sheet for each project; budget detail (SF 424A and budget justification narrative); grant assurances SF424B and CD-511, and SF-LLL and CD-346 if applicable; narrative project description, curriculum vitae or resume of primary project personnel, and a site location map such as a USGS topographic quadrangle map with site location(s) highlighted. Budgets must include a detailed breakdown by category of cost (object class) separated into federal and non-federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the project, with appropriate narrative justification for both the federal and non-federal shares. Budget justifications should indicate if the project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, whether the funds requested are federal or non-federal, and what amount has been requested or secured from other sources.

The narrative project description should be no more than 12 double-spaced pages long, in 12-point font, and should give a clear presentation of the proposed work. In general, applications should clearly demonstrate the broad-based benefits expected to specific habitats, and how these benefits will be achieved through the proposed restoration activities. The narrative should describe the historic condition of the restoration site and, if applicable, the processes which resulted in degradation of the area and how these processes have been abated to allow for successful restoration. It should identify the problems the project will address and describe short- and long-term objectives and goals, the methods for carrying out and monitoring the project, and the project's relevance and significance to enhancing habitat to benefit living marine resources.

Information appropriate to the type of project should be included. For example, dam removal projects should describe historical fish runs in the river, identify the river length that will be restored, the distance to the next upstream blockage, and any downstream blockages or seasonal impediments to fish passage. Projects proposing to change tidal flushing characteristics should be accompanied by a hydrograph showing any tidal restriction(s). Projects proposing to install fish passage devices or moveable control structures like self-regulating tide gates should submit as an appendix a management plan that details who will be in charge of the operation and maintenance of such structures, how they

will be operated, and similar details. Projects that would require permits and consultations should list all necessary permits required to complete the project, the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency and documentation of all permits already secured for the project; the narrative should provide assurance that all necessary environmental permits and consultations will be secured prior to the use of federal funds for construction. Proposals should provide enough detail for NOAA to make a NEPA determination (see Section VI. B. “Administrative and National Environmental Policy Act Requirements”); funds will not be released to successful applicants until NOAA completes necessary NEPA documentation. Applicants are encouraged to consult with NOAA as early as possible to obtain guidance with respect to the level and scope of information needed by NOAA to comply with NEPA; a phased approach may be recommended. The type of detailed information described above is critical to evaluating the significance of a project and its readiness to use available funding.

The project narrative should also describe the organizational structure of the applicant group, detail its qualifications, and identify proposed project staff; participants (project partners) other than the applicant, and their contributions should be identified. Inclusion of supplementary materials such as photographs, project designs, diagrams, copies of secured permits, etc. are strongly encouraged and do not count toward the project narrative page limit. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NOAA as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

Applications should not be bound in any manner and should be printed on one side only. Three hard copies (including one original signed in blue ink) of each application are required and must be submitted to the NOAA Restoration Center (see sub-section G. “Addresses”). Applicants may opt to submit additional hard copies (seven are needed for reviewing purposes) if it does not cause a financial hardship. An additional copy may also be submitted on a PC-compatible diskette or CD ROM in either Microsoft Word or WordPerfect formats. Applications for multiple projects submitted by the same applicant must be submitted in separate envelopes. This includes proposals aimed at specific scientific monitoring of a previously implemented or concurrent CRP project.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications for **project funding** under the CRP **must be received by or postmarked by September 12, 2003**. Applications received or postmarked after that time will not be considered for funding. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Applications delivered by a delivery service after the postmark date will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the application was provided to the delivery service on or prior to the specified postmark cut-off date. In any event, applications received later than 15 business days following the closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Applicants desiring acknowledgment of receipt of their applications should include a self-addressed post card.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.” Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State’s process

under EO 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments"; and Federal Acquisition Regulation, codified at 48 Code of Federal Regulations, subpart 31.2 "Contracts with Commercial Organizations." All cost reimbursement subawards (subgrants, subcontracts, etc.) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 120-150 days after the close of this solicitation. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for proposed restoration activities.

2. Indirect Costs

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the federal share of the indirect costs must not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the federal direct costs, the difference may be counted as part of the non-federal share. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

F. Other Requirements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), are applicable to this solicitation.

G. Addresses

Send applications to Christopher D. Doley, Director, NOAA Restoration Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East West Highway (F/HC3), Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282; ATTN: CRP Project Applications.

V. Application Review and Selection Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below.

1. Importance and Applicability of Proposal (25 points)

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state or local activities. For the Community-based Habitat Restoration Projects competition this includes:

Proposals will be evaluated on the potential of the project to benefit living marine resources based on the extent of proposed habitat restoration activities and the type(s) of habitat(s) that will be restored. In particular, NOAA will evaluate proposals based on the amount and type of habitat proposed for restoration and the potential of the project to restore, protect, conserve, and enhance habitats and ecosystems vital to self-sustaining populations of living marine resources under NOAA Fisheries stewardship; whether the habitat(s) to be restored will benefit commercial, recreational, threatened or endangered species; whether the proposal addresses a priority habitat, restoration need, special consideration, or is part of a watershed or community stewardship plan; the likelihood of success or results within the specified time frame; and whether the proposed project will complement or encourage other local restoration activities. Projects on permanently protected lands and those on private lands providing assurance that the project will be maintained for its intended purpose may be given priority consideration.

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (25 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the Community-based Habitat Restoration Projects competition this includes:

Proposals will be evaluated on the technical feasibility of the project from both biological and engineering perspectives, as well as on the adequacy of the implementation plan. Proposals will be evaluated on completeness and adequacy of detail of the planned restoration objective stated in the proposal, and whether the proposed approach is technically sound and uses appropriate methods; whether the proposed techniques and work plan are likely to achieve project goals and deliver tangible, specific results and benefits to living marine resources and if these benefits will be sustainable and long-lasting; the likelihood that the project will occur within the 24 month project period allowed; whether there is an effective mechanism to evaluate project success, including adequate and meaningful monitoring and plans for long-term management of the restored resource; and for assurance that implementation of the project will meet all federal, state and local environmental laws by obtaining applicable permits. Applications submitted with evidence of completed environmental assessments, completed consultations and/or secured permits, if applicable, are likely to score higher on this criterion. Proposals for science-based monitoring of existing or simultaneously proposed CRP projects will be evaluated on the extent to which the potential results advance restoration methods, techniques, and project implementation.

3. Overall Qualifications of Applicants (10 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the Community-based Habitat Restoration Projects competition this includes:

Applicants will be evaluated on their capacity to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work by examining the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing and effectively managing and overseeing projects that benefit living marine resources, including anadromous fish species. Communities and/or organizations developing their first locally-driven restoration project may not be able to document past experience and, therefore, will be evaluated on the basis of their potential to effectively manage and oversee all project phases by explaining characteristics such as education, training and/or experience of primary project participants, and facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to support the restoration work, including the availability of NOAA or other technical expertise to guide the project to a successful completion.

4. Project Costs (20 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the Community-based Habitat Restoration Projects competition this includes:

Proposals will be evaluated on their cost-effectiveness by examining the percentage of funds that will be dedicated to all phases of project implementation including physical, on-the-ground coastal habitat restoration and/or science-based monitoring, compared to the percentage that is for administration, salaries, overhead and travel. Proposals will be evaluated for whether the proposed budget is realistic, sufficiently detailed and commensurate with the project needs and time frame, and for appropriate budget breakdown and justification of both federal and non-federal shares by object class as listed on form SF-424A. Applications proposing to use restoration funds to expand an organization's day-to-day activities are unlikely to obtain a high score under this criterion. To encourage on-the-ground restoration, funding for salaries must be used to support staff directly involved in accomplishing the restoration work and should contain a detailed breakdown of personnel hours and costs by task. Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing \$5,000 or more) should be strongly tied to achieving on-the-ground habitat restoration and a comparison with rental costs should be used to justify the need to purchase. In general, funding requests for equipment purchases such as vehicles, boats and similar items will be a low priority.

Proposals also will be evaluated on the need for funding and the overall leverage of NOAA funds anticipated, including the amount of cash match; the potential for, or demonstrated NOAA involvement in/support of, the project; the ability to which the proposed project is likely to catalyze future restoration and protection of living marine resources; and the ability of the applicant to demonstrate that a significant benefit will be generated for a reasonable cost.

NOAA will expect cost-sharing to leverage funding or other resources that improve cost-effectiveness and to further encourage partnerships among government, industry, and academia. Applicants that provide documentation that acceptable secured match is available within the proposed

project period are likely to score higher on this criterion.

5. Outreach, Education and Community Involvement (20 points)

This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission. For the Community-based Habitat Restoration Projects competition this includes:

Proposals will be evaluated on activities proposed to involve citizens and broaden their participation in coastal habitat restoration and/or science-based monitoring and the depth and breadth of community support, as reflected by the diversity and strength of project partners. Community participation may include hands-on training, restoration and monitoring activities undertaken by volunteers; sponsorship by local entities, either through in-kind goods and services (earth-moving services, technical expertise, conservation easements) or cash contributions; public education and outreach as it relates to the proposed project; support from state and local governments; and ability to achieve long-term stewardship for restored living marine resources and to generate a community conservation ethic.

B. Review Process and Selection Factors

Applications will be screened by CRP staff to determine if they are eligible, complete and in accordance with instructions detailed in the standard NOAA Grants Application Package. Eligible restoration proposals will undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process. As appropriate during this process, the NOAA Restoration Center will solicit individual technical evaluations of each project proposed and may request evaluations from other NOAA offices, the Regional Fishery Management Councils, other federal and state agencies, such as state coastal management agencies and state fish and wildlife agencies, and private and public sector restoration experts who have knowledge of a specific applicant, program or its subject matter. Proposals also will be reviewed by NOAA regional and headquarters staff to determine how well they meet the stated aims of the CRP, and how well the proposal meets the goals of the NOAA Restoration Center (RC).

Applications for habitat restoration projects will be evaluated by at least three individual technical reviewers, including those mentioned in the above paragraph, according to the criteria and weights described in this solicitation. The proposals will be rated, and reviewer comments and composite project scores and a rank order will be presented to the Director of the NOAA Restoration Center (Director). The Director, in consultation with CRP staff, will select the proposals to be recommended to the Grants Management Division for funding and determine the amount of funds available for each approved proposal. The proposals shall be recommended in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors: (1) the availability of funds; (2) the balance and distribution of funds: a) geographically, b) by type of institution, c) by type of partners, d) by research areas, e) by project types; (3) duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA and/or other federal agencies; (4) program priorities and policy factors; (5) the applicant's prior award performance; (6) partnerships with/participation of targeted groups. Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest scored proposals. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing that their proposal was not among those recommended for funding, and unsuccessful applications will be kept on file until the close of the

following fiscal year then destroyed.

Successful applicants generally will be selected approximately 60-90 days after the close of this solicitation. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 120-150 days after the close of this solicitation, when all NOAA/applicant negotiations of cooperative activities have been completed. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for proposed restoration activities.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and the CRP staff. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

B. Administrative and National Environmental Policy Act Requirements

Successful applicants that accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce standard terms and conditions. This document will be provided with a copy of the award by the NOAA Grants Office, and can be found at: <http://www.osc.doc.gov/oebam/pdf/ST&C-rev-1002.pdf>. In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Office may have the following special terms and conditions, as applicable:

- (1) [APPLICANT] must maintain project files for all restoration activities taking place under this agreement. These files must contain, at a minimum, project work plans and copies of all federal, state and local permits/consultations associated with project implementation.
- (2) [APPLICANT] will ensure that implementation of the project will meet all state and local environmental laws and federal consistency requirements by obtaining applicable permits and consultations prior to expenditure of federal funds for those activities requiring permits and consultations. Verification of federal permits and environmental compliance related to this project must be presented to the NOAA Program Officer prior to project implementation. In addition, please provide a list of all local, state, and tribal permits acquired for this project. Verification of permits and approvals can be presented in the form of an email or letter to the Program Officer listing each permit or approval, its tracking number, the issuance date, and the expiration date applicable to that project.
- (3) [APPLICANT] will not expend any funds for project implementation until they have received written clearance from NOAA Fisheries on National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance on a project specific basis. [APPLICANT] agrees to assist and cooperate with NOAA Fisheries in the preparation of any NEPA compliance documentation.
- (4) [APPLICANT] should display, where appropriate and practical, publically visible signs indicating that the project has received funding through the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program. These signs should also identify other contributing partners. These

contributions should also be acknowledged in all communications with the media and the public and in all outreach related to the projects, and the program should be referenced in such communications by name as the “NOAA Community-based Restoration Program”.

(5) Semi-annual and final progress reports must be submitted using the CRP form and format approved by OMB under control number 0648-0472.

(6) The NOAA technical monitor for this project is [name] [address] [phone] [email].

The CRP will review successful applications for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act on a project by project basis. Restoration activities that are not covered by the NOAA Fisheries Community-based Restoration Program Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be reviewed under NOAA Administrative Order (NAO)216-6, Environmental Review Procedures for Implementing The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The CRP EA and FONSI can be found at:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/assessment/ea_main.html. NAO 216-6 is located at: <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~nao/216-6.html>.

C. Reporting Requirements

Financial reports are due semi-annually and should be submitted directly to the NOAA Grants Office. Financial reports cover the periods from October 1 - March 31 (due by April 30) and April 1 - September 30 (due by October 30).

Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6-month periods that begin with the start date an applicant has selected. Progress reports are due directly to the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program office and are due no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award.

Progress reports must be submitted using a specific format for narrative information and a fill-form for project specific details that can be found on the NOAA Restoration Center website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>. Use of this required progress report form and format involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, and has been approved by OMB under control number 0648-0472 and expires on April 30, 2006. Complete details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in the award documentation provided by the NOAA Grants office.

(MORE)

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Robin Bruckner, Alison Ward or Melanie Severin at (301) 713-0174, or by fax at (301) 713-0184, or by e-mail at Robin.Bruckner@noaa.gov, Alison.Ward@noaa.gov, or Melanie.Severin@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

The Community-based Restoration Program expects to solicit applications for establishing national and regional habitat restoration partnerships for up to 3 years beginning FY 2004. A separate notice of funding availability will be issued to request partnership applications.

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act [5 U.S.C. 553 (a) (2)] or by any other law for this document concerning grants, benefits, and contracts. Accordingly, a regulatory flexibility analysis is not required by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S. C. 601 et seq.).

This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

The use of the standard NOAA grants application package referred to in this notice involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, SF-LLL, and CD-346 have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046, and 0605-0001.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.

END